



THE
MONTHLY



GULL
BULLETIN

VOLUME 26

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF., DECEMBER, 1944

NUMBER 12

How Some Accidentals Visit California

What constitutes a vagrant among birds? What is an accidental? These questions regularly arise in the minds of readers of distributional lists and articles on migration. A vagrant as described in the dictionary is, one who strolls from place to place; an idle wanderer. In the A. O. U. Check-List on p. VII of the preface it is stated that, "Species known to breed or occur regularly anywhere within the area covered by the Check-List are included without comment but those of only casual or accidental occurrence are marked with a star." It can be assumed from this that accidentals are birds that normally do not breed or otherwise regularly visit any region in question.

To properly classify a species or subspecies of bird under the above it would be necessary to know all of the breeding localities, winter ranges and the migration routes between the summer and winter ranges. With such knowledge it would be possible to allocate all species and subspecies of birds in an area into the following classifications: residents, summer visitants, migrant, spring migrant, fall migrant, vagrant and accidental with the prefixing adjectives to those requiring it, i.e. abundant, common, uncommon, sparse, rare, irregular, etc.

Dr. Joseph Grinnell in the article "The Role of the Accidental", 1922, when writing on the occurrence of accidentals in California, stated that on the basis of recorded occurrences in the state for the previous 35 years, and following the same rate, all of the species of birds known to North America should be listed from California by the year 2331. This, of course, is only theoretical, as some species of North American birds would have great difficulty reaching California because of various limitations, such as their own physical strength, specialized food, geographic, and climatic factors. Those species and subspecies which are regularly migratory into the northern United States and Canada may well be expected to reach California sooner or later.

Many of the above species that go northward in Canada are found westward across Canada to the Rocky Mountains and even on to the Pacific ocean slopes in Canada and Alaska. The Rocky Mountains are crooked in their general north and south route across the United States, with a major jog along the Idaho-Montana boundary in which the Continental Divide runs east and west. The head waters of the upper Missouri River drainage basin is considerably west of the head waters of the upper Snake River drainage basin which is a tributary of the Columbia. Many so-called species of Eastern birds migrate south along the eastern slope of the Rockies. They could, and do get through the low break in the mountains in the above region. They could come through that break with the many species which

normally take that route on their way to the Great Basin and California.

Directly on a line with this break in the Rockies is the plateau region of northeastern California between the Sierra Nevada and the southern end of the Cascades. The Pitt River and the Klamath River head in this low plateau area.

Some birds which regularly come through by this route to California are Lesser Loon; Eared and Western Grebes; Whistling Swan; Canada, Lesser Canada, White-fronted, Lesser Snow and Ross's Geese; most of the ducks; Ferruginous and American Rough-legged Hawks; Sandhill and Little Brown Cranes; Mudhen; many of the shorebirds; Bonaparte Gull; Red-shafted Flicker and the hybrid between it and the Northern Flicker from the Montana area; Lewis's Woodpecker; Horned Larks of several subspecies; Western Crow; Sage Thrasher; Western Bluebirds; American Pipit; Northern Shrike; Orange-crowned, Myrtle and Audubon Warblers; Western Yellow-throat; Nevada Cowbird; Lark Bunting; Slate-colored Juncos; Western Lark and Gambel's Sparrows.

Some birds that accidentally come through presumably by that route, either by themselves or with other species are Blue Goose; Richardson Pigeon Hawk; Franklin's Gull; Black and White, Black-throated Green and Western Palm Warblers; Oven-bird; Grinnell's Water-Thrush; Common Redpoll; Nelson's, Western Tree, Harris's, White-throated, Eastern Fox and Swamp Sparrows; and Chestnut-collared Longspur.

Some species reach here accidentally via their north-bound migration from Mexico apparently becoming strayed on the table lands of that country and travelling with some of our north-bound nesting species. Warblers are particularly prone to wandering north with some of our western species. Rose-breasted Grosbeaks once started a breeding colony at Myer's near South Fork in Humboldt County.

Extensive wanderers or vagrants like the Bohemian Waxwings, Cross bills, Rosy Finches, Snow Buntings and Sea birds of various species are apt to show up most any place at the proper season and within the right environment.

The whole of bird migration is such an unsolved study that we still have much to learn: relative routes, food along the routes, wind and air currents, terrain, and many other interrelated studies, such as the routes of other species, with like habits found in the territory of the species in question. Bird banding and collecting along the flyways and on the breeding and wintering areas are the best methods of determining these movements. Most observers are not familiar enough with birds from other sections of North America to positively identify species in the field from places out of their regular territory. This is where the banding trap and the collector has the advantage. Sight records are of no permanent value nor are they recognized by authorities. Many banders are now photographing all questionable birds as proof of identification.

—Donald D. McLean

November Meeting

The 326th meeting was held Thursday evening, November 9th in the Assembly Room, San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco, Calif. President Arthur H. Myer presided.

Miss Ivander MacIver, treasurer, reported two new members presented by Mrs. Otis Smith; Mrs. Clifford Taylor and Miss Mary E. Moynihan. The new Junior member is Bob Sicular.

Bird observations were reported by Mrs. Vee Curtis, Mrs. Estella Bruce, Miss Frances J. Blake, Mr. Myer, and Mr. J. J. Webb who also read a note from Ensign Sven E. Sjodahl from the U.S.S. Pathfinder who thanked him for the use of Mr. Webb's binoculars while he was in San Francisco. Ensign Sjodahl added a San

Francisco collection of birds to his Eastern list before he shipped out to the South Pacific.

Mrs. Enid Austin asked the members to please report seeing any white Pelicans to her.

Mr. Brighton C. Cain, of the Oakland Area Council, Boy Scouts of America, and a past president of the Audubon Association of the Pacific, illustrated his bird lecture "Arousing Interest In Birds", with slides and pelts of birds. Mr. Cain brought his audience into many of the games he plays with the Scouts identifying the birds. Mr. Cain gave the audience much information as to the structure, habits, habitats, and songs of the birds under discussion.

—Jean B. Fay, Recording Secretary

November Field Trip

The November Field Trip on the 12th was taken to the Chain of Lakes, Golden Gate Park, with eight members and six guests. The day was sunny and calm with a few clouds left from the preceding stormy week—perfect birding weather.

The route followed the margins of the three lakes starting from the North Lake, proceeding along the western borders, and then continuing back along the other side with a detour to cover the buffalo and deer paddocks.

Among the Mallards on the North Lake were three or four Pintails, all female, and three Shovellers, two males and a female. Several Baldpates were found on the Middle Lake.

A Kingfisher and two Black-crowned Night Herons were also seen at the North Lake as was a male Yellow-throat which obligingly presented his striking black and yellow pattern several times in full view.

While we were eating lunch, a flock of seven Ravens passed overhead flying from north to south. After lunch many of the group departed leaving only four to go on to the beach, where three additions were made to the day's list—California Brown Pelican, Cormorant, and a Horned Grebe which was found dead on the sand.

The following thirty-five species were observed:

Horned Grebe	Western Gull	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Pied-billed Grebe	California Gull	Hermit Thrush
California Brown Pelican	Ring-billed Gull	Myrtle Warbler
Cormorant	Anna Hummingbird	Audubon Warbler
Black-crowned	Western Belted	Townsend Warbler
Night Heron	Kingfisher	Yellow-throat
Mallard	Red-shafted Flicker	Pileolated Warbler
Baldpate	Black Phoebe	House Sparrow
Pintail	Chestnut-backed	Pine Siskin
Shoveller	Chickadee	Junco
Desert Sparrow Hawk	Bush-tit	White-crowned Sparrow
Coot	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Fox Sparrow
	Creepers	Song Sparrow

Members present were: Mav Barry, Dorothy Chandler, Martha Curtis, Vee Curtis, Jean Bradford Fay, Jack Heyneman, H. V. Leffler, and Arthur H. Myer.

Guests were: Sara Landels, Wm. D. Landels, E. A. Mayers, James H. Rayner, Jane G. Rayner, and Marguerite Vincent.

Dorothy Candler, Leader and Historian

Observations

Edited by Junea W. Kelly

Varied Thrush, Nov. 2, near Meadow Club, Fairfax Grade and also near Lake Lagunitas, Marin County; Glenn Ensign.

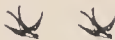
1 Snowy Egret, 4 Black Turnstones, 2 Avocets, Nov. 11, Berkeley Aquatic Park; Ruth Elwonger.

Fox Sparrow, Oct. 29, Lincoln Sparrow and 3 Pileolated Warblers, Nov. 5, 1 Pileolated Warbler Nov. 19, Lake Temescal, Oakland; Mrs. Vee Curtis.

Spotted Owl, Nov. 19, Broadway Terrace and Gwin Road, Oakland; Mrs. Estella Bruce.

3 American Golden-eye Ducks; 7 Double-crested Cormorants Nov. 16, Lake Merritt; Herman Leffler.

Yellow-shafted Flicker, Nov. 11; Mocking bird, Nov. 16 and 21; Varied Thrush, Nov. 21, Codornices Park, Berkeley; Surf Scoters, San Leandro Bay, Nov. 15; Junea W. Kelly.



Change of Annual Census

Mr. Herman V. Leffler, TEmplebar 8200, announces a change in date for the census to December 17. Two groups for the census will meet at 10th Avenue and Fulton; two for Lake Merced and Chain of Lakes at 42nd Avenue and Fulton at 9:30 a.m.

December Meeting

The regular meeting of the Association will be held on Thursday, Dec. 14th at 7:30 p.m. in the Assembly Room, San Francisco Public Library, Larkin and McAllister Streets. The speaker will be Mr. Paul Covell, the Lake Merritt Water Fowl guide. His subject will be

"Interesting Experiences with California Waterfowl."

December Field Trip

Will be taken to Lake Merritt (Oakland) for the Duck or Wild Bird census. The party will meet at the Duck Feeding station at 10:00 a.m., on Dec. 10th — note date especially.

S. F. members and friends take the "B" train from the Terminal at approximately 9:22 a.m. Get off at Perkins station and walk across the park. East Bay members take No. 18 or No. 12 cars and get off at Grand Ave. and Perkins.

Leader: Mrs. Junea W. Kelly.
Bring binoculars and lunch.

Audubon Association of the Pacific

Organized January 25, 1917

For the Study and the Protection of Birds

President.....	Mr. Arthur H. Myer.....	25 El Camino Real, Berkeley 5
Corresponding Secretary.....	Mr. Joseph J. Webb.....	519 California St., San Francisco 4
Treasurer.....	Miss Ivander MacIver.....	2414 Telegraph Ave., Berkeley 4
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Monthly meetings second Thursday, 7:30 p.m.

Assembly Room, San Francisco Public Library, Larkin and McAllister Streets, San Francisco.
Membership dues, payable January 1st, \$3.00 per year.

Student memberships, \$1.50 per year. Life memberships, \$50.00.
Members are responsible for dues until written notice of resignation is received by Treasurer.